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Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects

First session

Summary record of the 1st meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 28 February 2000, at 10 a.m.

Temporary Chairman: Mr. Dhanapala ..... (Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs)
Chairman: Mr. Dos Santos ..... (Mozambique)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Opening of the session

1. **The Temporary Chairman** declared open the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 54/54 V.

Election of the Chairman

2. **The Temporary Chairman** said that the candidacy of Mr. Carlos Dos Santos, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Mozambique, had been endorsed by the Group of African States, noted with satisfaction by the Coordination Bureau of the Non-Aligned Countries and favourably received by the members of the Preparatory Committee in informal consultations. He took it that the Committee wished to elect him by acclamation.

3. *It was so decided.*

4. *Mr. Dos Santos (Mozambique) was elected Chairman of the Preparatory Committee.*

5. **The Temporary Chairman** said that, by electing an individual with broad experience and deep knowledge in the field of disarmament and a skilled representative of a country affected by the scourge of small arms, the Committee had demonstrated its determination to conduct its business effectively. The Committee and the Chairman could be assured of the full support of the Department for Disarmament Affairs.

6. *Mr. Dos Santos (Mozambique) took the Chair.*

Statement by the Chairman

7. **The Chairman** said that, as a representative of a country, subregion and continent that had suffered from the ready availability of small arms and light weapons through illicit trade, he was deeply committed to the success of the preparatory process and hence of the Conference. The task of the Committee was to fulfil the mandate given by the General Assembly in its resolution 54/54 V to make recommendations to the Conference on all relevant matters, including the objective, a draft agenda, draft rules of procedure and draft final documents, which would include a programme of action, and to decide on background documents to be made available in advance.

8. In the past five years, the United Nations had played a leading role in addressing the problem of the excessive and destabilizing accumulation and transfer of small arms and light weapons. The momentum would not have been as strong and broad-based, however, without the efforts of subregional and regional organizations. The challenge would be to build upon the important subregional and regional agreements already adopted in order to create a global consensus at the Conference on a programme of pragmatic, realistic and practical actions aimed at curbing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Member States had also recognized the importance of the role played by civil society, including non-governmental organizations, in addressing the problem. It was important to bear in mind that the ultimate aim was to alleviate human suffering by strengthening the economic and social stability of countries affected by the scourge.

9. In its first session, the Preparatory Committee should provide the road map leading to the Conference in 2001 and decide on its structure. The decisions to be taken included the date and venue of the Conference. The Committee should work in an open and transparent manner to achieve its goals.

Election of other officers

10. **The Chairman** noted that the Committee was to elect 19 Vice-Chairmen and one Rapporteur and read out the list of the candidates endorsed by the regional groups. Since the number of candidates endorsed by the Group of Asian States, the Group of Eastern European States and the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States was equal to the number of vacancies to be filled by each group, he took it that the Committee wished to elect them by acclamation.

11. *It was so decided.*

12. *Mr. Donowaki (Japan), Mr. Nejab (Islamic Republic of Iran), Mr. Shen Guofang (China) and Mr. Widodo (Indonesia) from the Group of Asian States; Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan), Mr. Kuchynski (Ukraine), Mr. Sychov (Belarus) and Mr. Wyganowski (Poland) from the Group of Eastern European States; and Mr. Miranda (Peru), Mr. Pierce (Jamaica), Mr. Soares (Brazil) and Ms. Vargas (Costa Rica) from the Group*

of Latin American and Caribbean States were elected Vice-Chairmen of the Preparatory Committee.

13. **The Chairman** said that no candidates had yet been proposed for the vacancies to be filled from the Group of African States and the Group of Western European and Other States. He took it that the Committee wished to postpone the election of those Vice-Chairmen and the election of the Rapporteur to a later date.

14. *It was so decided.*

Adoption of the agenda (A/CONF.192/PC/1)

15. **The Chairman** drew attention to the provisional agenda for the first session of the Preparatory Committee, as contained in document A/CONF.192/PC/1, drawn up on the basis of General Assembly resolution 54/54 V.

16. *The agenda was adopted.*

Organization of work

17. **The Chairman** drew the Committee's attention to an informal paper containing the tentative working timetable for the first session. He reminded the Committee that, by a decision of the Fifth Committee, summary records would be provided only for meetings at which decisions would be taken. In view of the large number of delegations wishing to participate in the general debate, the Committee might consider extending the general debate to the morning meeting on Wednesday, 1 March 2000. He understood that the Committee wished to hold the meetings devoted to an exchange of views on agenda items 5, 6, 7 and 8 as private meetings in accordance with rule 60 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

18. **Mr. Mesdoua** (Algeria) said that, since some of the general debate would concern agenda items 5, 6, 7 and 8, if the exchange of views on those items was to be held in private, it seemed inconsistent to have the general debate conducted in public.

19. **Mr. Ogunbanwo** (Nigeria) said that his delegation believed that the meetings of the Preparatory Committee should be as transparent as possible and that the general debate should therefore be open to the public, including representatives of non-governmental organizations.

20. **Mr. Du Preez** (South Africa), **Mr. Pearson** (New Zealand) and **Mr. Duarte** (Portugal) agreed with the representative of Nigeria that Preparatory Committee proceedings should be as transparent as possible and open to civil society.

21. **Mr. Mesdoua** (Algeria) said that he had merely desired clarification. His delegation in fact strongly supported the principle of transparency and would like to see it applied more generally in the United Nations. He would even be in favour of having the meetings of the Preparatory Committee open to the public. Nevertheless, his delegation was flexible and would conform to the desires of the Committee.

22. **The Chairman** reminded the Committee that the question of the modalities of attendance of non-governmental organizations would be taken up at a later time under agenda item 5. He took it that the Committee wished to approve the tentative working timetable as orally revised.

23. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.